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SENATOR COLLINS SPONSORS THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Senator Susan Collins joined Senate colleagues in a press conference today in support of the reintroduction of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) reauthorization. A primary sponsor of the bill, Senator Collins was joined by senators from both parties, including New Hampshire's Senator Kelly Ayotte.

"My home state of Maine has one of the lowest crime rates in the country," said Senator Collins. "Tragically, however, half of all murders over the last decade were the result of domestic violence and the number of reported rapes is on the rise.... VAWA has provided invaluable support for law enforcement, courts, rape crisis centers, shelters, prevention efforts, community outreach, and programs that provide services for victims and their families. Combating domestic violence and rape should never be a partisan issue, and we must all work together to advance this important legislation."

VAWA, stalled in the House of Representatives last session, offers real solutions to domestic and sexual violence victims across the state of Maine and the US.

"Since the passage of VAWA, Maine has strengthened laws regarding sexual violence and stalking and has implemented programs which continue to yield tangible results for victims and for public safety," says Elizabeth Ward Saxl, Executive Director of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA). "We are grateful to Senator Collins for her support of VAWA and for her commitment to violence prevention and response."

Rape is the most costly violent crime, costing 127 billion dollars annually – excluding the cost of childhood sexual abuse.¹ Given that nearly 13,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence this year,² the cost to Maine is enormous. VAWA helps control these costs by enabling sexual assault support centers to provide free, necessary, quality services to victims who need help. VAWA saved 12.6 billion dollars in its first six years alone.³

VAWA funds programs such as Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs), where sexual assault advocates, law enforcement, healthcare professionals, and prosecutors partner in each Maine county to provide an organized response to sexual assault. Research indicates that cases involving SARTs are reported to law enforcement more quickly (3 days, versus 33 days, on average) and are more than three times as likely to result in charges being filed against an offender.⁴ Without VAWA, programs like SARTs would be nearly impossible to implement.

The VAWA reauthorization also includes protections for populations which experience a higher level of domestic and sexual violence such as: Native Americans, immigrants, and the LGBTQ population.

¹ Miller, Ted, Cohen, Mark and Wiersema, Brian. *Victim Costs & Consequences: A New Look*. National Institute of Justice Report, U.S. Department of Justice, 1996.

² Rubin, Mark. (2011). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing Public Policy for Safer Communities*. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

³ Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States. (2003). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Centers for Injury Prevention and Control. Atlanta, GA.

⁴ Nugent-Borakove, M. et al. (2006). *Testing the efficacy of SANE/SART programs: Do they make a difference in sexual assault arrest & prosecution outcomes?* Retrieved <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/214252.pdf>